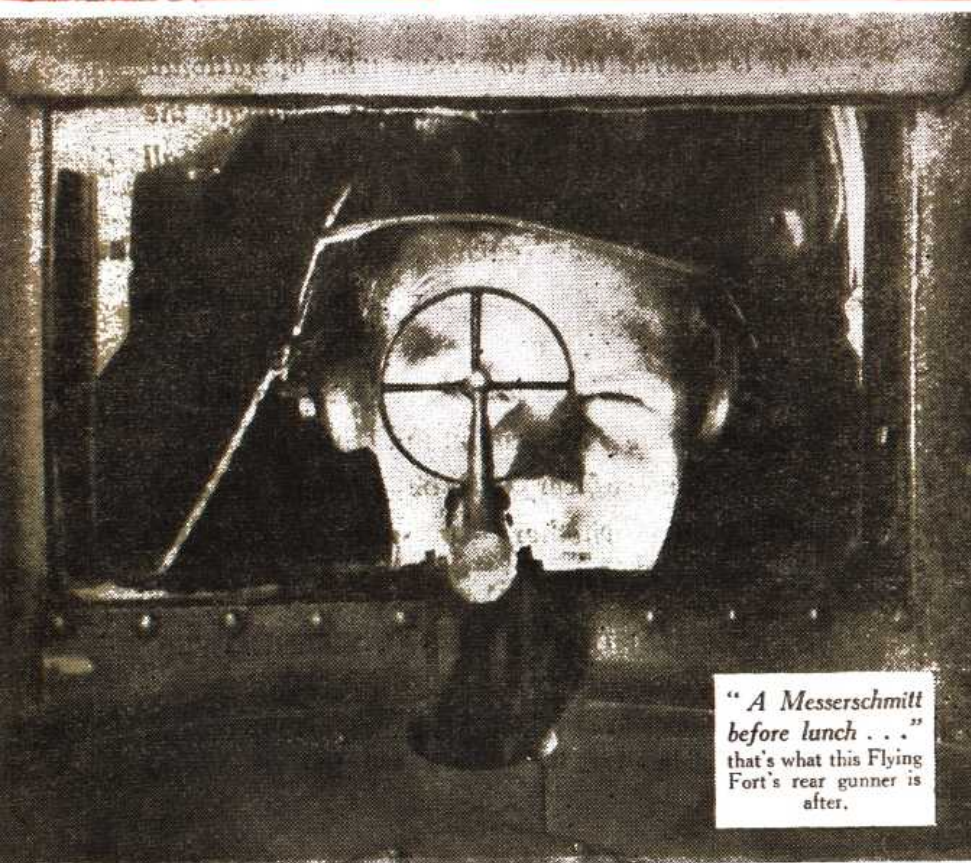


Vol. II. No. 29  
19 July 1944



# ARMY TALKS



*"A Messerschmitt  
before lunch . . ."*  
that's what this Flying  
Fort's rear gunner is  
after.

## AIR POWER



RESTRICTED • EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS • UNITED STATES ARMY

**"It is desired that, consistent with operational requirements, group discussions, through the medium ARMY TALKS . . . be held in all units within this command, using one hour of training time each week . . . unit commanders will conduct an orientation program, using not less than one hour training time a week . . . presentation of this material is a command function. . . . A company officer will be present at each discussion, whether or not he is the discussion leader. . . ."**

**BY COMMAND OF GENERAL EISENHOWER.**

**(Extract from letter ETO, 30 April 1944, AG 352/2 OpGA,  
Subject: Education in Military and Current Affairs.)**

# ARMY TALKS

EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

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## *Air Power*

**J**UST before Allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, some 1,300 American heavy bombers and large formations of RAF heavies joined with Allied naval forces to smash a sizeable opening in Hitler's highly publicized "impregnable" Atlantic wall. Most of the bombers found their targets hidden by clouds and bombed them with the aid of special instruments, using techniques practised for such an eventuality. While the big bombers were blasting at the beach defenses, American medium bombers and fighters flew inland to strike at communication centers, air fields, troop concentrations, railways and truck convoys, disrupting enemy efforts to bring up reinforcements.

The contribution of air power to the success of the landings has been recognized by every soldier in the Allied invasion army. But why didn't the Luftwaffe rise in force to try to prevent the landings?

## *Why Luftwaffe Was Grounded On D-Day*

D-Day could have been an answer to a German prayer. Thousands of ships and boats and landing craft literally crowded the Channel. An air fleet of heavy bombers, dive bombers and fighters could have created terrific havoc. Yet the Luftwaffe did not appear. Hardly a dozen enemy planes were sighted all day long on D-Day, and very few have appeared since.

The Germans certainly must have been aware of the opportunity. Their success in the initial phases of the war was largely made possible by employ-





ment of air power. Though depleted, the Luftwaffe still makes vicious attacks on our bombers. Why, then, did it fail to rise to the challenge of D-Day?

The answer lies in the systematic pattern of Allied air assault that steadily, month by month, had prepared the way for the ground forces. As explained later, the German Air Force's reserves and sources of equipment had been pounded for months until all that remained was insufficient to support a consistently powerful fighting force. This spadework was so thorough that the Luftwaffe could have risen in force on D-Day only at suicidal cost. If the Germans had taken to the skies on this occasion, they would have been forced to fight their way through the greatest air fleet that has ever been dispatched in a single operation. On D-Day Allied aircraft provided an impenetrable aerial barrier as far as 100 miles behind the beachheads. The Luftwaffe was unable to compete.

As this issue of ARMY TALKS is written, American troops have occupied Cherbourg, extending the occupied Allied invasion coast to well over 150 miles. These first weeks have not been easy, but there has been steady progress by the Allied armies, achieved by coordinated blows of air, ground and naval forces.

The long air assault on Germany and military targets in Nazi occupied countries has stirred endless discussion and, in some cases, misconception as to the aims and results of strategic bombing. It is hoped that this brief review will be helpful in placing into proper focus the relationship of air power to present overall operations.

## **RAF Introduced Large-Scale Operations**

The attack on Western Europe started from the air nearly four years ago. It had its beginning soon after the Luftwaffe made its unsuccessful bid to bludgeon Britain to her knees in the blitz against London, Coventry, Liverpool, Hull, Bristol and other industrial centers. The first air assault was on a modest scale. England was not ready to fight a major war on land and gravely wounded by her Allied reverses in France. All she



could do then was to send numerically small formations of British heavy bombers by night to attack the sprawling iron and steel industries of the Ruhr.

By present-day standards, these were puny blows directed at an enemy who stood supreme in nearly all of Europe. Yet every bomb that hit the coke ovens and rolling mills of the Ruhr in those early days is related directly to what is happening in Normandy in the summer of 1944. For these initial attacks against the Ruhr were the explosive seeds from which grew strategic bombing on a giant scale.

It has been said that the Luftwaffe's air blitz against England in 1940-1 was strategic bombing of considerable magnitude. It is true that the Nazis attacked in great force, but as one competent air observer put it: "they had neither the imagination nor the physical resources to capitalize on their revolutionary conception of air power." They had a powerful air force, but one trained and equipped for close support only (tactical) and not able to defend itself on long range, independent operations. Neither did they have the true strategic concept which recognizes the limitations of air assault, thereby failing to realize the wastefulness and futility of haphazard assault against cities rather than against specific industrial systems.

### 'Round-The-Clock Strategic Bombing

It has been Britain and America who have developed strategic bombing as a weapon that can make the ultimate victory more certain and less costly. Paralysis of the enemy war production of critical items and disruption of communications by which he moves troops and supplies and destruction of his will to resist are dividends of air assault. As in any profitable transaction, the dividend rises in direct proportion to the investment.

In their application of strategic bombing, America and Britain have developed two techniques. Britain is the adherent of so-called "area"



bombing—the soaking with explosives of a selected industrial area. British bombers, more lightly armored than the Fortress or Liberator, operate at night. America, on the other hand, is the exponent of precise destruction of specific units of vital industries. Heavily armed, equipped with precision bombsights and other specialized bombing instruments, the American heavies concentrate their explosives on a limited target area—a single

factory, perhaps, or the vital parts of a very large plant, rather than the area in which that plant is located. According to the American concept, precision bombing is a redundant expression, it being considered that precise target selection and placement of bombs are but the logical application of the principle of economy of effort. The training of artillerymen and infantrymen to hit specific points is another application.

Since August 17, 1942, when a dozen Eighth Air Force Flying Fortresses took off from England to bomb the railway yards at Rouen, the American and British strategic bombing techniques have complemented each other in the constantly mounting air offensive against the Nazi war machine.

## All Of Germany Now Within Our Reach

By the time of the Normandy landings, no target of military or economic importance to Germany was safe from Allied aerial blows. The air attack, which had started with the first small bombings of the Ruhr, now had mushroomed into an unceasing day and night assault in heavy force from bases in England, Africa, Italy and Russia. Long-range American-made fighter planes protected our daylight precision bombers all the way to Berlin and beyond.

As early as the summer of 1942 the RAF was capable of marshalling 1,000 bombers for assaults on German cities. The RAF has grown since then and so have the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, which now can send out several thousand heavy bombers at one time. The U.S. Strategic Air Forces include the Eighth, based in Britain, and the Fifteenth, operating from Mediterranean and Russian bases. In the first three weeks of Allied landings, the Eighth Air Force alone was able to send its heavy bombers on 22,300 sorties over Europe.

Together with the rising might of strategic bombing has been the growth of tactical air operations. The objectives of a tactical air force are to help neutralize the enemy air force so that it will offer a minimum of interference to ground operations, to knock out enemy defenses on the ground, and disrupt rail and highway transportation, making it as difficult as possible





for the enemy to move troops and supplies into threatened areas. Bridges and railroad yards are smashed so as to isolate the enemy in an attacked area from outside sources of supply and reinforcement.

The principal weapons of the tactical air force are the medium and light bombers, the fighter bombers and the fighters. In the months preceding D-Day, the U.S. Ninth Air Force was designated as the air arm to carry out the tactical assignment of American air power mobilized in England. This did not reduce tactical operations of RAF aircraft and fighters of the Eighth Air Force, which continued to slash at every target of possible value to the enemy.

In the early years of the war, the Luftwaffe was the most powerful air force in the world. It was capable of strong offensive operations. At the present time, it is largely a defensive arm that must be used sparingly.



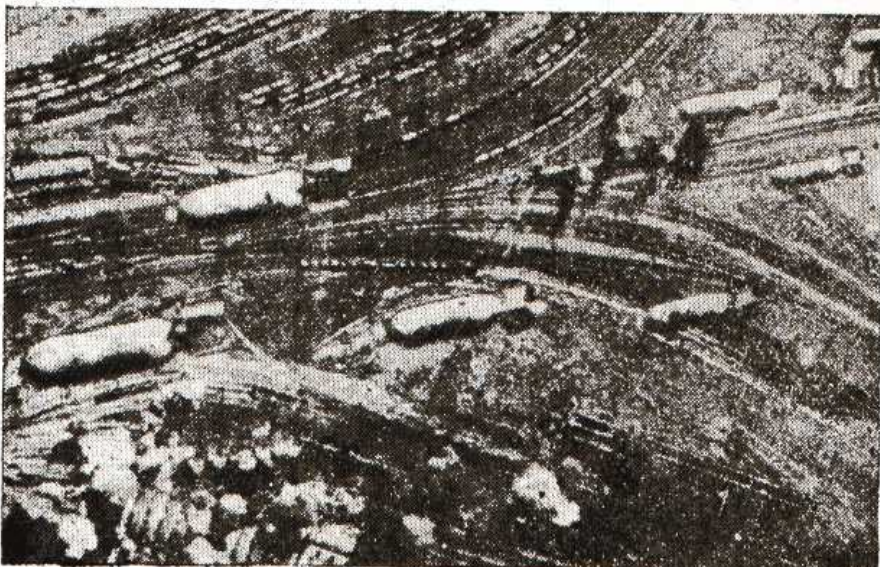
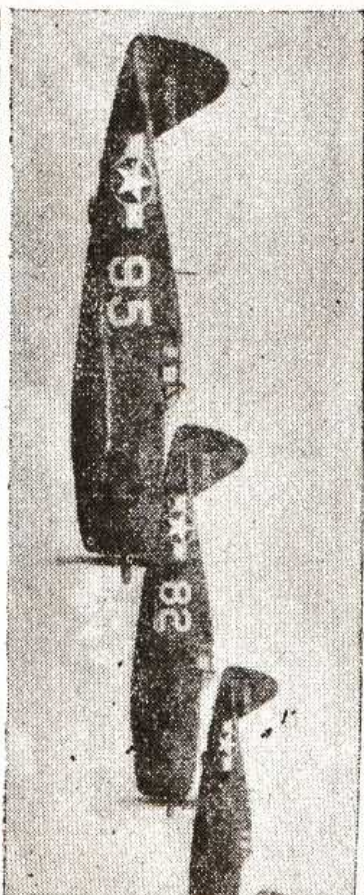
The main reason why the German Air Force has been thus enfeebled is the defeat of its plan, undertaken early in 1942, to quadruple its monthly output of fighter planes. The German plan had been adopted to meet the mounting blows aimed at the Reich by British and American bombers. It was never carried out fully because of our relentless air assault on fighter factories and plants producing bearings for aircraft and other war machines.

The American air assault on Nazi aircraft factories cut their production in March, 1944, below the rate of August, 1942. For April, 1944, instead of being quadrupled according to the German plan, the output was lower still. The Luftwaffe had to dip deeply into reserves to equip its front line units.

## **Tactical Bombing Reduces Luftwaffe Strength**

While strategic bombing was reducing the Luftwaffe's productive capacity, fighters of both strategic and tactical air forces were whittling down its operational strength in air combat and airdrome strafing. American fighters in Europe have destroyed better than 10,000 German aircraft to date in air and ground attack. This figure does not include the extensive damage done by the RAF.

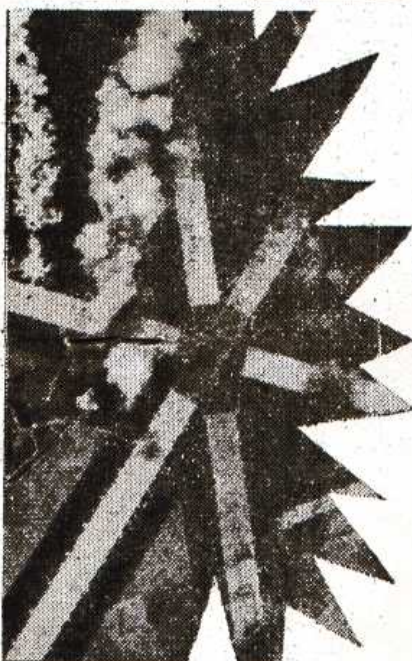




Railway yards in France are Ninth Air Force target, with locomotive shops on right receiving direct hits.



Carrying invasion insignia, a B-26 Marauder charges over the English Channel.



Long-range P-47 Thunderbolt fighters (left), B-17 Flying Fortresses on way to Continent (right).

The runways of a Nazi bomber base get a pounding.



These bombs are dropped from Eighth Air Force heavies right into the heart of Berlin, just east of Tempelhof Station.



The reduced strength of the German Air Force was reflected not only in less active aerial opposition to our continual bombing attacks, but in loss of aerial domination over the ground fronts.

An army can be likened to a spear. Behind the sharp head of the striking force is the driving shaft. In every army, the majority of troops are occupied with supply, transport, communication and repair rather than actual combat. And the spear in itself is given its thrust by the arm of the home front, the factories and the farms. The primary purpose of strategic bombing is to cripple the arm and break the shaft.

In selecting targets, Allied air chiefs always have given priority to those where destruction or damage would have the greatest effect on the enemy's war machine.

The bombing of the oil refineries at Ploesti, coupled with recent widespread attacks on synthetic oil plants and crude refineries, has reduced the fighting power of the Reich. Just how much it has affected that power no one yet knows for sure. But oil is as essential as powder to a modern army. And it is known that more than 50 percent of Germany's capacity to produce synthetic oil, plus a great part of her crude capacity, has been knocked out.

## Nazis Lose Bearings, War Factories

Air attacks on heavy industry in the Ruhr have also had very serious effects. The Germans faced the necessity of scattering plants to avoid attack and this was like trying to transport the iron and steel industry of Pennsylvania to somewhere in Indiana. Furthermore, the bombing of aircraft factories called for immediate repairs. Which must be given priority? With continual bombing, RAF by night and American Air Forces by day, the point was reached in Germany where there simply wasn't enough material or labor to go round. To this was added the dislocation of city utilities and the problem of workers' housing in bombed areas.

The air attacks on transport, railroad yards, repair shops, rolling stock, locomotive factories and harbor installations helped to disrupt the German



economy. They deprived the enemy more and more of the possibility of farming out repairs to dispersed plants and undoubtedly caused a crisis in a transport system already overtaxed with war work.

Nothing better illustrates strategic air assault than the crippling of the German ball bearing industry. Ball bearings are used in tanks, airplanes, and trucks, as well as in the machine tools which make practically all war material. While Germany was straining to increase production of critical items, the bombers were hammering ball bearing plants in Schweinfurt, Berlin, Stuttgart, Steyr, Perosa, Turin and Paris. The exact percentage by which production was reduced cannot be calculated. But if it was cut in half, this meant that, when reserves were exhausted, for every two big guns or tanks worn out, destroyed or captured, ball bearings for only one could be furnished. For every two planes shot down, only one new one could be equipped with the essential ball bearings.

Among the heaviest air blows of the war were those aimed at targets in Berlin. The German capital was the largest producer of electrical engineering equipment, cables, precision instruments for fire control and



aircraft, specialized textile products such as parachutes, land armaments, tanks, small arms, torpedoes, mines, radio equipment and like items. Most of the Wehrmacht's tanks rolled from its three great factories and Berlin manufactured one-third of the country's locomotives. In addition it was the hub of the railroad system, a central point of the great canal system, the focal point of European air traffic. It was the commercial, financial, political and military capital of the Reich.

## ***Bombing Paralyzes Their Transport System***

The crippling of Berlin as a productive and transport center is comparable to what might happen if bombing should devastate three American cities, Detroit, New York and Washington. In addition to direct damage to war objectives, the whole system of city transport and utilities felt the strain.



In May, the air offensive by the U.S. Strategic Air Forces reached a new peak. This was the final month before the combined air, sea and land operations against the Continent.

During May, Eighth Air Force heavy bombers were dispatched on 25 days and those of the Fifteenth Air Force on 22 days. More than 25,000 bomber sorties and nearly 20,000 fighter sorties were flown in this month. Perhaps the most important targets attacked in this great offensive were synthetic oil plants in Germany and Czechoslovakia, whose output represented more than half of the total productive capacity available to the enemy. The bombing of the synthetic oil plants was coordinated with attacks against the natural oil refineries at Ploesti.

Throughout the month, Allied assaults were continued against the German aircraft industry, including factories which had been damaged previously and which were undergoing repair. Bombers also pin-pointed factory installations suspected of housing dispersed production.

There were four new attacks on Berlin in May as well as heavy damage to the largest armored vehicle depot and assembly plant in Germany.

In addition, the May offensive saw an all out attack by the Eighth, Ninth and British Air Forces against enemy rail communications, advanced air bases and tactical objectives in preparation for invasion.

### ***Pay-Off On D-Day, And The Job Ahead***

On D-Day the long air offensives paid dividends. The German Air Force failed to carry out a single function of an air force to counter the allied operation against Normandy. It failed to provide adequate reconnaissance in advance or to offer any effective opposition to the landings.

The ground troops, charging from the landing craft in some areas, met formidable opposition, but few had to face attacks from enemy planes. Of 24 railway bridges leading to the beachhead area, only one remained on D-Day. Nine out of 14 highway bridges had been destroyed. And on D-Day-plus-one, all the bridges over which Rommel might have rushed a counter-attacking force were knocked out. Columns of trucks and material were destroyed on their way to Normandy. Locomotives and trains were put out of action.

Landings of the ground forces on French soil did not mean that the air phase of the Allied campaign was over. While the ground soldier carries the ball, air power will do its best to run interference for him. Our air forces will continue to knock out factories before tanks and guns and planes can be made; they will continue to destroy as many as possible of the weapons that are made before they reach the ground troops. They will keep enemy reinforcements at a distance by destroying his transport and communications and they will bomb and strafe machine-gun nests, supply dumps and other points of enemy strength. From now on to the end of the war, the Wehrmacht will face a fighting ground-air team.

### ***Nazis Admit Damage Caused By Allied Bombing***

The frankest admissions yet made by the enemy of damage done by Allied bombers came from Radio Berlin last week. Nazi commentators

and war correspondents gave significant accounts of the devastating disruption caused to Germany's military supply lines by the Allied Air Forces — tales of desperate measures resorted to by the Boche in his futile attempt to cope with American and British air might.

One broadcast picked up by the United Press, told of German truck drivers getting the same extra pay as air crews because of their constant peril. "On every mudguard a spotter is crouched," the UP reported, "anxiously scanning the skies in all directions."

Dr. Christof Freiheer von Imhorn, war correspondent back from the front in Normandy, said in a broadcast quoted by Reuter: "The Allies have adopted an utterly new strategy in their invasion of Europe which neither the German High Command nor any other command has ever before had to cope with.

"This novel Allied strategy represents a complete breakaway from all traditional forms by which wars have been waged, either in the past or present, in Russia or in Italy," the Nazi correspondent continued. "Hitherto our Supreme Command has been able to deploy, concentrate and send up reinforcements on relatively secure supply lines and communications. But for a month now, ever since the Allies landed and secured a relatively narrow front in Normandy, all military rules and laws of the past have gone by the board.

"Our hinterland has been under perpetual bombardment of an intensity never before matched or even dreamed of, by the enemy's air forces, artillery, and even naval guns," Imhorn said.

"Under such conditions no German concentrations could be built up within striking distance of the front.

"Our command could not use the highways and railways which it had counted on. Our marching columns were banned from the roads.

"We had anticipated a terrific battle of material on the model of the Eastern Front, but the new Allied strategy confronted us with an absolutely novel situation.

"Our fighting men were exposed to the peril of being cut off from their supplies, isolated and thus destroyed.

"It has required all the organizing talent of the German High Command for the improvization on the grandest scale, for even the smallest paths and byways receive constant attention from the enemy.

"Hundreds upon hundreds of roads are being pounded continuously.

"The German High Command is therefore abstaining from concentrating striking forces behind the front and sending columns along the roads.

"Our operational reserves are, as it were, swallowed up by the earth, moving invisibly by devious ways to reach critical points in good time.

"By day our forces go to earth, by night they move. This is a great achievement by the German Supreme Command," the broadcast concluded.

This issue of ARMY TALKS was prepared by Captain Eric Friedheim of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. Captain Friedheim was formerly Aviation Editor of International News Service and a member of the Aviation Writers' Association.



## ***How to prepare this Army Talk***

**A**LL of us have heard their muffled thunder in the skies and thrown back our heads to watch them streaming eastward : out for a coastal sweep across the Low Countries, bombing doodle-bug emplacements near Calais or, perhaps—objective Berlin. Some of us, crouched in a foxhole, have watched for them anxiously, and blessed them when they drove away strafing Messerschmitts or knocked out an enemy strong point. Some GIs may remember how the Air Force flew in badly needed supplies, a part for a bulldozer or machine gun ammunition. Medics may think of the air ambulance first when the Air Force is mentioned.



No matter what our experience or knowledge of air power, every man in the army wants to know the score and understand the all-over picture of how Air Force works with the artillery, the infantry, the tanks and the navy. That is what this article is all about. It is not merely trying to tell you how good the Air Force is—it is good—but much more, it is trying to show you how the Air Forces have worked to achieve certain objectives in a pattern by a fixed time schedule. They have softened up the enemy so the infantry, armor, and artillery could deliver the final blows.



So here is your Air Force. Take a good look at it and think constantly : How does this apply to me—to my outfit ? How can it help us and how can we work with it ? One thing to bear in mind is that air superiority was a vital factor in winning the beachheads on June 6, 1944.

**I**N a previous issue of ARMY TALKS (Vol. I, No. 8) air power was discussed in the light of the situation as it then existed. Since that time the Army Air Forces have plastered Germany, France and the Low Countries in the process of preparing Normandy for the landings of June 6. The whole strategic and tactical picture of the war has changed. The tempo of bombing has been in high gear for the past months, and air power has engaged increasingly in the attack on fortress Europe.

For the purpose of starting discussion questions are useful. Here are a few to get the meeting under way:

1. At the start of the war Germany's Air Force was the greatest in the world. Why did it fail to knock out Britain's capacity to wage war?
2. How have the roles of Allied air power and the Luftwaffe changed? Has the Luftwaffe been able to maintain its fighting qualities—its personnel—its effectiveness as an aggressive weapon?
3. Do you think if we had continued strategic bombing on an ever rising scale we could have conquered Germany by air alone?
4. What has been the cumulative effect of bombing in preparing for Allied landings in Europe?
5. In what way have the Air Forces and Army Ground Forces shown they can wage war as a consolidated weapon, working side by side?
6. How essential is the SOS, ETO, to the Theater Air Forces? What direct contribution does the SOS make to the Air Forces?



Let us keep constantly in mind that free, hard-hitting and provocative discussion is one of the essential parts of the way of life we are fighting to defend and maintain. The topic of this issue of ARMY TALKS gives us material on one of the most powerful single weapons we have to maintain that right and that way of life.



The American Forces Network puts the ARMY TALKS program on the air at 1430 hours every Saturday.



## **TIP TO UNIT COMMANDERS**

### **ARMY TALKS ON THE AIR**

**Tune in on your American Forces Network station for a dramatized presentation of the week's Army Talk.**



**TIME:** Saturday, 22 July 1944  
at 1430-1500 hours.

**PLACE:** Any convenient spot  
where you have a radio  
and a room for your  
platoon to listen in  
and discuss the subject.

**STATION:**  
American Forces Network.